

MEREZHKOVSKY'S SUPPRESSED PLAY TO BE GIVEN HERE

"The Death of Czar Paul I., Which Is Under the Ban in Russia, to Be Produced by Orleeff

BY HERMAN BERNSTEIN.

Paul Orleeff, the Russian actor now playing in repertoire in a little theatre on Fourth street near the Bowery, will soon produce Dmitri Merezhkovsky's historical drama "The Death of Paul I." Though published in Germany several years ago in the Russian language the drama in which the famous Russian writer depicted the murder of the Czar on March 11, 1801, in accordance with historical facts cannot cross the Russian frontier in book form and can certainly not be produced on any stage in the Russian Empire. It is also believed that great influence has been exerted by the Russian Government in other countries to prevent its production there.

Merezhkovsky, the famous novelist and critic, wrote the drama for Paul Orleeff, after the Russian actor had won fame throughout Russia for his portrayal of the neurotic Czar Fedor. But the censor has prohibited the production, and like many other important works written by the men who constituted Russia's pride, such as Tolstoy and Andreiev, it had to be brought out first in another land. Thus many of the best works produced by the best Russian writers are not accessible to the Russian reader unless he happens to be outside of Russia. In speaking of the enigmatic figure of Czar Paul I. Paul Orleeff said:

"I believe that if Paul had not been murdered Russia would have been a republic long ago. He was at times a brute and at times a dreamer, as meek as a child. He had great imagination and lofty outbursts of noble passions and he was a Russian Hamlet who often manifested great determination and extraordinary will power.

"It was he who tore the map of the world in two and declared that half should belong to Napoleon and the other half to him. The historians cannot agree to this very day as to the real character of Paul. One historian, a German, who made a profound study of this Russian Emperor, said that no man has ever manifested such contrasts of lights and shades as Paul, that his mind and his passions, his kindness and his cruelty, his virtues and his vices, his enthusiasm in friendship, which often turned into hatred; his appreciation of all that was done for him wholeheartedly, all these characteristics stood out in him strongly and led him to his death.

"Another historian declared that there never existed an emperor more terrible in his outbursts of cruelty and more generous in his moments of magnanimity than Czar Paul, but there was no constancy in his character. One word dropped in the course of a conversation was sufficient to turn his favor into disfavor, and those who were honored and rewarded one day were removed from court and exiled to Siberia on the next day.

"Nevertheless he wished to be just. It often happened that after he had disgraced and exiled a former favorite of his Paul called him back, begged his forgiveness, assured him of his error and bestowed new honors upon him for his humiliation.

"Of all the figures in Russian history I always longed to portray Paul, the beast and the dreamer, the demon and the child, the tyrant and the weakling."

And Mr. Orleeff took up the Merezhkovsky drama and read passages from it showing these rapid transitions from cruelty to tenderness, from bloodthirstiness to tears.

Mr. Orleeff himself has written enough to fill a large volume illuminating every trait of the many-sided character of the crowned Russian Hamlet who was murdered with the sanction of his own son, Alexander I. His own studies of the type of Paul have led Orleeff to make a few changes here and there in the Merezhkovsky drama.

"How will Merezhkovsky look upon these changes?" I asked. "Do you not think that he will be displeased when he learns that you have taken such liberties with his work?"

"This is one of my weaknesses," he replied. "Or, shall I say, it is one of my good qualities which I cannot suppress? I must always interpret the characters I portray as I know them, as I feel them, as I believe after careful study they should be interpreted."

"Thus I have interpreted Ibsen in the home of Ibsen. When I played 'Ghosts' in Christiania a few years ago with a company of Norwegian players they were shocked at the rehearsals at some of the things I was doing with the part of Oswald. They held special meetings and were in despair for they explained to me that they had their traditions and that the public would be shocked by certain scenes, by my conception of Oswald."

"But I played Oswald as I always play him. The press on the following day was enthusiastic in its praise of my production. A year later when my friends visited Christiania and witnessed there a performance of 'Ghosts' by the leading Norwegian artists they saw that all the innovations I had introduced in the 'Ghosts' were accepted by the Norwegian players, their traditions notwithstanding. The old is not always good, just as the new is not always bad."

Then Mr. Orleeff added lightly: "Laws are not made for fools, so I am seldom guided by laws in art."

But the Russian artist is not quite so proud of his achievements and honors in Norway or in Germany, or in the capitals of Russia, as he is of the fact that he gave with great success, free of charge, numerous performances in Russian villages for the peasants, often training some of the peasants to act with him in folk plays. With them he appeared under an assumed name, so as not to give the impression that he was doing these things for the sake of advertising himself.

"That was my greatest joy and satisfaction. I believe in the healthy, wholesome masses, for from them have sprung and will again spring the Chastolapins and the Gorkys. I have told Tolstoy about my performances for and with the peasants and he was moved to tears," Mr. Orleeff said.

Dmitri Merezhkovsky's drama, "The Death of Paul I.," is in five acts. The subtitle of the play is "The Reign of the Beast—Paul I., Alexander I., Nicholas I." The first scene represents a square in front of the Mikhailovsky palace. It is a gray winter morning. The sounds of drums and trumpets are heard. Em-

peror Paul himself is commanding the army. His sons, Grand Duke Konstantin and Grand Duke Alexander are watching the maneuvers. Konstantin remarks of his father Paul:

"He was a beast yesterday, and he will be a beast to-day."

are marching. The commanders enter and salute the Emperor. Transformed by love he now forgives all those he had punished a little while before. Alexander kisses the Emperor's hand. The music plays and Paul is moved by the melody and also hums light heartedly.

Alexander cries, covering his face with his hands, while his brother, the Grand Duke Konstantin, is trying to console him. Count Palen congratulates the commanders upon the Czar's kindness in having forgiven them all.

One of the commanders remarks: "He had forgiven us, but we—"

To which Count Palen replies: "Not so loud, not so loud, Prince. You are again repeating the same thing. Remember what I have told you, he who

Jura Mountains, in a deserted hut overgrown with verdure, our life will flow on like a magnificent dream, in the embrace of nature and innocence!

Elizabeth—Yes, yes, in a deserted hut. [She is playing the harp. A pause.]

Alexander—What are you thinking of? Do you know, Liza, when you speak it always seems to me that you are thinking of something else.

Elizabeth—Of something else? No. But perhaps I am thinking of something else. Ah, a string has broken. I cannot play any more.

Alexander—Come over to me. Elizabeth [going over to Alexander]—Well, what is it?

Alexander—How unbecoming this white dress is to you! When you stand thus near me, so bright in the twilight, you are like Euridice or Psyche.

Konstantin kisses his wife's hands he wrings them and bites them so that she screams with pain?

Alexander—Who told you that? Elizabeth—She herself told it to me. And before he used to amuse himself at the man's by firing live rats from a cannon.

Alexander—Why do you tell me this? Elizabeth—Because I do not want to be a Psyche. Do you hear? I do not want to be a Psyche. I am tired of it, I feel disgusted. Cupid and Psyche—what an absurdity!

[Silence.] A little later the Emperor enters. Both Alexander and Elizabeth are startled.

Paul—Were you frightened, my friends? You thought a ghost had entered?

Alexander—Pardon me, your Majesty.

The Enigmatic Character of the Murdered Emperor as Depicted by the Russian Dramatist.

by Voltaire. [Reads.] "Rome est libre. Il suffit. Rendons grace aux dieux." Which means: "The Czar was killed, thank God!" Who understood this?

Alexander—I do not know, your Majesty. This is grandmother's book. Perhaps she herself did it.

Paul—Sir, you have all your traits from grandmother—and you are your grandmother's grandson. Do you remember

Alexander—Peter Alexeyevich! Peter Alexeyevich! [Alexander steps at the door.]

Alexander—Never mind. You may go. [Palen goes out and Alexander falls upon the couch with his face on the pillow. Elizabeth enters.]

Elizabeth—Well, what have you decided? [Alexander looks at her.] Elizabeth—Embrace him and stroke his hair!

Elizabeth—My boy, my poor boy! Alexander—I cannot, I cannot, I cannot, Liza.

Elizabeth—What is to be done, Sasha? We must— [Alexander rises and staring into her eyes.]—What if there should be bloodshed?

Elizabeth—Better bloodshed, better anything than that which is going on now, let our blood—

Alexander—No, no, no. [Pause.] Why are you silent? Tell me. Or do you think that we ought to cross over the blood?

Elizabeth—I do not know. Alexander—No, no, no. Do not speak, do not dare to speak. If you speak God will not forgive us, but we must.

Elizabeth—I do not know whether God will forgive us, but we must.

Several intensely dramatic scenes follow. Count Palen informs Czar Paul that there is a conspiracy against his life and secures from him an order to execute Alexander, imprison Konstantin and arrest the entire royal family. Then Palen comes to Alexander and shows him the order signed by his father.

Alexander [Lowering his hands in a soft voice]—Well, it is better this way. Palen—Better?

Alexander—Yes, better I than that he— Palen—Not you alone, but also your wife, your mother, your brothers and sisters, and we all—all Russia, all Europe! You will be responsible to God for all this.

Alexander—If? Palen—Yes, you can—

Alexander—What can I? Palen—You can save yourself and all.

Alexander—But to-morrow— Palen—To-morrow we will be lost, but this night is still ours. He believed me—

Alexander—He believed you? Palen—That is all, conducting the conspiracy to betray you.

Alexander—And you betrayed me? Palen—I betrayed you in order to save you.

Alexander—You betrayed me to him, and to me. But in the end to whom will you betray us both?

Palen—You may decide that yourself. Alexander—It is all the same to me. [Silence.]

Palen—Your Highness, I am a patient man, but there is a limit to my patience. Alexander—Is this a threat?

Palen—Is it for me to threaten? I am myself on the brink of ruin. Alexander—Tell me, have you ever cried?

Palen—What a question? I cried when I was a child. Alexander—And later—now?

Palen—People at my age cry but rarely. Alexander—You do not cry, but you are laughing. There is always a smile on your face. Even now—

Palen—It seems that you are also laughing now. Well, it is your will. I do not carry my sword in vain, but I cannot answer you, Emperor.

Alexander—What Emperor am I? Condemned to death. Palen—You are beginning to cry; now permit me also to cry. I can also cry, although you do not believe me. To-morrow you will be Emperor or nothing, but to-night you are a man. To-night we are all human beings—you and I and he.

Palen—Do you think it was easy to bear all that I have endured when he embraced me here, kissed me, called me his friend, thanked me for my loyalty and trusted me like a little child?

Alexander—For whom have you done all this? Palen—For myself and for you. Alexander—Thank you humbly.

Palen—No, not for me and for you alone, but for Russia, for Europe, for all mankind. For is there a greater horror in the whole world than a mad autocrat?

Like a wild beast that has broken loose from his cage and that is attacking everybody—

Alexander—How you despise him! Palen—I despise him? What for? Does he know what he is doing? He is like a madman with a razor. I thought that God has chosen you and me for the greatest heroic deed—to give back the human rights to forty millions of slaves. Now I see that I am wrong. For is there a greater horror in the whole world than a mad autocrat?

Like a wild beast that has broken loose from his cage and that is attacking everybody—

Alexander—Peter Alexeyevich, forgive me. Palen—Your Highness!

Alexander—I am guilty; forgive me! Palen—You? You? No, it is I. Your Highness—Your Highness—

[He kneels before Alexander.] Alexander—What are you doing, Count? Get up!

Palen—Yes, your Majesty! Henceforth you are to me the Emperor of Russia, you and no other. I am the servant of our fatherland, chosen and blessed by God. [He kisses Alexander's hands.]

Alexander—No, no; you did not understand me. Palen—I understood everything.

Alexander—But you did not understand me—do you hear? I do not want to do it— Palen—You do not want to do it? Well, then I will do it for you! I alone! And no one will ever know. Let everybody think that I and not you have done it—

Let my head perish, but you may be saved! Alexander—Don't, don't! For God's sake promise me, swear—

Palen—I swear that I will do everything within human power to avoid that— But say no more. It is done, it is done! Thank God, Russia is saved! [He hands him a document.]

Alexander—What is this? Palen—A manifesto announcing the abdication of Emperor Paul and the coronation of Emperor Alexander.

[Alexander looks at Palen in silence for a long time.] Alexander—You want me to sign this? Palen—Yes.

Alexander—With blood? Palen—Why with blood? With ink.

Alexander—I thought you wanted me to sign it with blood.

Then there is a beautiful love scene between Paul and Anna, his favorite, during which Paul says to her:

"When the burden of Russia, the burden of Europe, the burden of the whole world rests upon one head it is easy to go mad. God and I—and no one else, that is why it is so hard for me. A man could hardly endure this. My throne is my cross; my purple cloak is my blood; my crown is my wreath of thorns; the thorns have pierced my head. What for, what for, O Lord? Thy will be done! But it is painful, painful, painful."

The last act is devoted to a realistic and dramatic scene showing how Paul was murdered at night in his bedroom by the conspirators, led by Count Palen.



To which the other son, Alexander, replies: "He had three men lashed to death yesterday."

Paul enters, surrounded by his suite, commanders of various regiments, the governor of St. Petersburg, Count Palen and others. Paul in the very first scene shows his cruelty to some of the commanders, torturing them physically, and ordering some of them to Siberia.

In the midst of his fury, while all are trembling, Alexander hands the Emperor a letter from Anna, his favorite. Paul reads the letter. The commander of one of the regiments and Grand Duke Konstantin watch him.

Konstantin [making the sign of the cross]—Holy Virgin, help us! Annushka, help us!

Commander—The better seems to produce an effect upon him. Konstantin—Yes, his face has brightened. He is smiling. Well, thank God! Thank God! The dimple has saved us. . . . Annushka is a wonder!

Palen—Monseigneur. Paul—Just for a few words, your Highness. Count von Palen, please take over the command. I must go at once.

They start. Konstantin and the other commander remain. Paul takes Alexander by the arm.

Paul—You are well versed in sentiments, Sasha; you will understand me. Oh, why do people know so little what is love and what a great sacred mystery is hidden under that name!

[They walk off.] [Commander—And there, behind the door, an execution is going on—do you hear, your Highness?]

Konstantin—Yes, the poor wretch is bleeding like a sheep under the knife. Paul—Anna, Anna! Your name is everywhere. My heart is beating and my soul is in a fever. What a life of me worth if love did not sweeten it with its balsam!

Palen—Yes, exactly—balsam. [They resume their walk.]

Konstantin—They have agreed on that. Sasha is a past master in these affairs—he should have been an actor. And that man is still whining.

Commander—I cannot bear it, your Highness. Let us go away, for the sake of Christ!

Konstantin—We must not go now. Heaven forbid, father may notice us, and may think that we were listening. We must not disturb him now—let him talk as much as he likes. . . . [Listening.]

He seems to have stopped crying? No, now he is yelling louder than before. He is disgusting to hear! But then, we shall all have the same fate. . . .

Palen—I am endowed by nature with a sensitive heart, Sasha. One day I saw a little violet—it grew near a rock, it was almost covered with stones, where not a drop of dew could refresh it. My soul was seized with a new melancholy, a tear drop fell from my eye and the violet, refreshed by my tear, opened. Such is my love for Anna.

The drum is beating and the soldiers

talks is a scoundrel, he who does is a brave man!"

The following scene is in the study of Grand Duke Alexander. Grand Duke Alexander is speaking with his wife, Elizabeth:

Alexander—Ah, my only dream is that when I become Emperor I will leave the throne. I will abdicate. I will show to everybody how I hate despotism, how I value the rights of man—les droits de l'homme. I will grant Russia a constitution, I will make Russia a republic—all they want, and then I will go away with you, my dear. I will fee far, far away. There on the banks of the Rhine or on the blue

Elizabeth—Vous êtes trop aimable, monseigneur! But don't kiss my hands. Don't! Do you remember what you said the other day—that you and I were like brother and sister. Like brother and sister.

Alexander—But, Liza—

Elizabeth—But—Is it true that wh-

It is dark. I will have the candles lit— Paul—It is not necessary. [Elizabeth is about to walk out.] Where are you going, madam? You are not disturbing us. [Elizabeth walks over to the window.]

Paul—[Picking up a book—] What is this? Rousseau. And this? Brutus. Tragedy

Paul [falling on his knees]—Father! Father! I never wanted to. Don't you see that I do not want it even now? I implore you, save me from the throne, damn me, have mercy on me!

Paul—[Picking up a book—] What is this? Rousseau. And this? Brutus. Tragedy

Paul [retreating]—Yes, a knight. You are right, madam. I beg your pardon. I was excited. But how brave you are. I do not know that. A Psyche, and yet so brave! I like that. I wish all were like you. Thank you. Allow me to kiss your hand, your highness. What? Don't be afraid, I will not bite it. I do not bite as yet. Ha, ha, ha!

Paul kisses Elizabeth's hand and bows politely.

When he leaves the room a little later Count Palen enters. Elizabeth also goes out.

Count Palen—We must make haste. Only hours are left now, not days. You know our plan: to capture the Emperor, to declare him ill and force him to abdicate in order to crown you. I am not speaking for myself, but in the name of the Senate of the army and the nobility—in the name of the whole Russian people, whose only desire is to see Alexander as their Emperor.

Alexander—Force him? You do not know him—he would rather die—

Palen—Serious diseases require serious remedies: if he will not abdicate we will put him into the Schusselburg fortress.

Alexander—Count, what are you saying? Palen—You may rest at ease, Emperor. The guards are ours—they will not betray us.

Alexander—That was not what I meant. I do not want to do you hear, I do not want you to look at me like that about my father.

Palen [after a pause]—Now I know what you do not want, but I don't know what you want.

Alexander—I do not want anything! Leave me alone.

Palen—Your Highness, there are times when it is madness, when it is a crime not to want anything.

Alexander—How dare you, sir? Palen—I am telling you what my duty as a citizen dictates me.

Palen—[Palen jumps to his feet and stamping the floor, like Paul—Get out, get out! I cannot bear this any longer. I cannot, I cannot! I do not want to be the tool of your low designs! You are a traitor! I shall never lift my hand against the Emperor, against my father! I would rather die! I am going at once to my father and tell him everything.]

Palen—It seems that we are all losing our reason. I am outspoken, your Highness. I am not cunning. What I think I say. I tell you everything frankly, and I will go to the scaffold openly. Farewell. [He goes toward the door.]

CHINA'S REVOLT REALLY PREMATURE

An Accident Caused the Outbreak at Least a Month Earlier Than Planned.

From the Special Correspondent of THE SUN. HANKOW, China, Jan. 15.—In a previous article mention was made of the fact that the breaking out of the Chinese revolution on the night of October 10 was premature and was due to an explosion in a building in the Russian concession, where bombs were being manufactured by the revolutionists for the destruction of Viceroy Jui Cheng's yamen. Through this explosion the Viceroy discovered the plans of the leaders of the rebellion. The story in detail is now told in Hankow for the first time.

Gen. Liu Kung, Inspector-General of the republican Government in Wuchang, and Gen. Sun Wu, Gen. Li Yuan Hung's chief of staff, were the two men who were leading the conspiracy in Hankow and Wuchang. They had rented the house in which the explosion occurred and were engaged in the manufacture of bombs, as well as in organizing the disaffected soldiers in Wuchang and endeavoring to persuade those who were thought to be in sympathy with the movement to join them.

When the explosion occurred on the afternoon of October 8 through carelessness in handling some of the materials for the bombs it was Gen. Sun Wu who endeavored entirely to destroy the house by pouring kerosene over inflammables and applying the torch. This he was unable to do before the arrival of the fire department and he was forced to make his escape.

Lists of soldiers were found, together with white badges marked with different characters for various regiments and many bombs stowed away in a room in one of the upper floors. This news soon reached the ears of Viceroy Jui Cheng and he immediately caused an investigation to be made and summarily beheaded four of the ringleaders whose names he had. Gen. Liu Kung says that his brother was arrested, but was not beheaded; instead he was tortured in the hope of making him disclose the names of his fellow conspirators.

Gen. Sun Wu was severely burned

about the face by the explosion, but he was kept in hiding by friends in Hankow. Because of his injuries he was unable until later to participate in the first uprising.

Gen. Liu went on: "I saw that all would be ruined if the revolt did not begin at once, although we had not expected to complete our preparations until some time in December, when arrangements were to be made for uprisings to take place simultaneously in eight provinces."

"The soldiers had no badges, so I wrote to them on the morning of October 10 that any white band could be used as a sign and that the revolution should take place that night at 10 o'clock, as Viceroy Jui had all their names and in order to save their lives the revolt would have to start at once."

"Some of the soldiers did not wait for the appointed time, but began their work at half past 7, when they sent men to guard all the gates of Wuchang and to fire upon any one who did not stop at their command. The other soldiers heard the firing and realized what had happened. Then they all produced white bands, which they tied around their arms and went to the Viceroy's yamen, but found that he had escaped through a hole dug in the back wall and had taken refuge on one of the men-of-war at Hanyang. As all the gates of the city were held by the revolutionists, he must have been let down over the wall by a rope."

"Practically all the soldiers joined in the mutiny with the exception of part of the commissariat corps and about 250 soldiers who fled with Gen. Chang Paio. I had meanwhile crossed the Yangtze from Hanyang and immediately called a meeting of the revolutionist leaders, who decided not to elect one of their own number as commander."

"We were perplexed about the selection of a leader. Col. Li Yuan Hung of the mixed brigade was suggested as an officer who was popular and well educated. So we sent some of our soldiers to go and arrest him and bring him to the meeting."

When he came we told him what we proposed.

"He declined to take the leadership, making trifling excuses. We ordered several of our soldiers to put their hands at his neck and then told him that he would be killed at once if he refused to follow our directions. He was then induced to take the office and to have the proclamations issued in his name."

"Immediately afterward the revolutionists and the leading officers gathered at the Provincial Assembly hall (now burned) and drew up the proclamations which were issued."

Dr. S. G. Adams of the American Baptist Mission, who is now engaged in Red Cross work, has just returned from Yanglo, where he reports there are 30,000 rebels practically without medical officers and not even supplied with first aid bandages. He informed THE SUN correspondent that a great number of deaths had occurred in the last two days among the rebel soldiers through their eating fish and other Chinese food cooked in poisonous oil.

It is asserted by the rebel officers that the Manchus have had access to the oil, and the poison was put in the jars by them. Dr. Adams says that over 200 deaths have already occurred and most of the attacks have resulted fatally. When he left the rebel encampment yesterday there was a very bitter feeling among the soldiers.

While at the camp Dr. Adams had a peculiar experience. The rebels are still engaged in recruiting, and some of the patriots who have been imbued with the republican doctrines are very young. One soldier he saw was so diminutive that Dr. Adams, who speaks Chinese, stopped and asked him his age. The youngster replied that he was 13 years old, but he could fire a gun as well as a man. The doctor smiled at the sight of the boy who was carrying a gun taller than himself, at which the boy became enraged and as he walked away he called to Dr. Adams in Chinese:

"So you don't think I am able to fight, do you? Well, this will show you," and snatching the action to the word leveled and fired the gun before the astonished physician could do a thing.

The shot happily missed its mark by a foot or two, and the youngster is now paying the penalty for his quickness on the trigger, according to the peculiar Chinese notions of punishment.